

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3787

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON UNN

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA UNN

CINCPAC IMMEDIATE

DIA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 8909

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y T E X T

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, TH

SUBJ: CHARACTERIZATION OF THE SECOND SANYA CABINET

REF: BANGKOK 8856

SUMMARY: THE SECOND SANYA CABINET (REFTEL) IS LARGER THAN THE FIRST
WITH AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF DEPUTY MINISTERS IN DEFENSE,
INTERIOR, EDUCATION AND AGRICULTURE. THE CABINET CONTAINS DECIDEDLY
YOUNGER MEN GROUPED IN THE ECONOMIC AFFAIRS MINISTRIES. THEIR CAB-
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INET POSITONS MAY REFLECT DISCRETE LOBBYING FROM KASEM CHATIKAWANIT

WHO CHAIRS THE "GROUP OF 99" CAUCUS OF NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY MEMBERS. THERE ARE NO ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY OFFICERS IN THE CABINET, UNLESS ONE COUNTS GENERAL PRACHUAP SUNTHARANGKUN WHO HAS FOR SOME TIME BEEN SECONDED TO THE POLICE. THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE CABINET AND THE "GROUP OF 99" MAY SMOOTH EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS DURING THE SECOND SANYA CABINET. WE DO NOT FORESEE THAT THE NEW CABINET WILL PRESS FOR ANY MAJOR CHANGES IN THAI-U.S. RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SECOND SANYA CABINET IS LARGER THAN THE PREVIOUS 27-MAN CABINET. RESPONDING TO WELL KNOW, BUT NOT NECESSARILY EFFECTIVE, ADMINISTRATIVE PRINCIPLES, THE DEFENSE, INTERIOR, AGRICULTURE, AND EDUCATION MINISTRIES NOW HAVE MULTIPLE DEPUTIES. SANYA'S 30-MAN CABINET INCLUDES 11 FORMER MEMBERS AND 19 NEW FACES. "THE NATION" MAY 31 SAID THAT THE AVERAGE AGE OF THE CABINET WAS 49.

2. GENERAL KHRUAN SUTHINAN'S SELECTION AS DEFENSE MINISTER APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN AN ATTEMPT TO FIND SOMEONE WITH A GOOD REPUTATION AMONG THE MILITARY WHO WAS SENIOR TO AIR CHIEF MARSHAL THAWI CHUNLASAP. AN OFFICIAL IN THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (NLA) SECRETARIAT TOLD US THAT KHRUAN'S APPOINTMENT WILL BE INSTRUMENTAL IN FURTHER REMOVING THAWI FROM POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE, AND AN IMPORTANT STEP IN OTHER MILITARY PERSONNEL CHANGES WHICH GENERAL KRIT SIWARA DESIRES.

3. UNLIKE THE PREVIOUS CABINET, THE SECOND SANYA CABINET DOES NOT CONTAIN ACTIVE MILITARY OFFICERS, UNLESS ONE COUNTS GENERAL PRACHUAP SUNTHARANGKUN WHO HAS FOR SOME TIME BEEN SECONDED TO THE POLICE. ANSWERING A QUESTION ON THIS SUBJECT PRIME MINISTER SANYA SAID IN HIS MAY 30 PRESS CONFERENCE THAT HE WAS RESPONDING TO "A TREND THAT WAS PROPER AND SUITABLE." THE UNOFFICIAL USIS TRANSLATION OF HIS REMARKS CONTINUES THAT "THE MILITARY AND POLITICS, OR CAREER OFFICIALS AND POLITICS, SHOULD BE KEPT STRICTLY APART. AT THE PRESENT TIME WE CAN INVITE A RETIRED MILITARY MAN TO BE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, AND EVEN THOUGH HE MIGHT BE RATHER OLD IT HAS ITS USES. BUT IN REGARD TO CAREER OFFICIALS IT IS DIFFICULT TO KEEP THEM STRICTLY SEPARATE, BECAUSE NO REAL POLITICIANS CAN BE FOUND YET. THEREFORE, THE PLAN TO KEEP CAREER OFFICIALS STRICTLY SEPARATE FROM POLITICAL POSITIONS MUST BE CARRIED OUT BY GRADUAL STAGES. THE SELECTION OF RETIRED MILITARY OFFICERS FOR CERTAIN POLITICAL POSI-
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TIONS IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR POLICY AND PLANS."

4. SANYA APPARENTLY HAD TROUBLE FINDING SOMEONE WILLING TO TAKE THE FINANCE MINISTRY POSITIONS. TWO NOMINEES TURNED DOWN SANYA'S OFFER. EVEN SOMMAI HUNTRAKUN MAY HAVE BEEN INITIALLY RETICENT. HIS CO-WORKERS AT THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCE CORPORATION OF THAILAND (IFCT) TOLD US THAT SOMMAI PROBABLY WOULD PREFER TO HAVE BEEN FINANCE MINISTER UNDER AN ELECTED GOVERNMENT IN ORDER TO HAVE

ENOUGH TIME TO DO AN EFFECTIVE JOB.

5. PRIME MINISTER SANYA PROBABLY PICKED THE OLDER MEN IN THE CABINET FROM PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE. SANYA'S SELECTION OF SOME OF THE YOUNGER MEN MAY REFLECT DISCREET LOBBYING ON THE PART OF KASEM CHATIKAWANIT, WHOCHAIRS THE "GROUP OF 99 (KASEM SUWANNAKUN, CHAO NA SINLAWAN, THALOENG THAMRONG NAWASAWAT, THAIAN ATCHAKUN, PRAKAIPHET INTHUSOPHON, WICHAN NIWATWONG, SIPHUM SUKHANET, SOMMAI HUNTRAKUN, AND PRASONG SUKHUM) ARE AMONG THE 19 NEW FACES IN THE CABINET.

6. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OFFICIALS MAY RESENT THE SELECTION OF TWO POLICE OFFICIALS AS DEPUTY MINISTERS. THE ABSENCE OF A CABINET MEMBER WITH DIRECT TIES TO THE POWERFUL DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION (DOLA) PARTICULARLY STANDS OUT IN THIS CABINET. DOLA HAS A TRADITIONAL RIVALRY WITH THE POLICE, AND DOLA RESENTMENT MAY BE A SOURCE OF TROUBLE FOR THE GOVERNMENT IN THE COMING MONTHS.

7. SSANYA HAS PLACED THE ADMINISTRATIVE MINISTRIES IN THE HANDS OF SENIOR OFFICIALS AND THE ECONOMIC MINISTRIES UNDER YOUNG TECHNOCRATS. WHETHER THESE SPIRITED YOUNG MEN CAN GAIN THE COOPERATION OF THEIR SENIOR COLLEAGUES WILL SAY MUCH FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SECOND SANYA CABINET. AMONG CABINET MEMBERS THERE ARE A NUMBER OF COMMONALITIES, HOWEVER, WHICH MAY FACILITATE THEIR WORKING RELATIONSHIPS. FOR EXAMPLE, APPROXIMATELY FIVE OF THEM (SOMPHOP HOTRAKIT, SOMMAI HUNTRAKUN, ARUN SORATHET, UDOM POSAKRITSANA, SIPHUM SUKHANET) ATTENDED ASSUMPTION COLLEGE, A CATHOLIC RUN HIGH SCHOOL.

8. CONCLUSION: SANYA RECOGNIZES THAT DOMESTIC AFFAIRS WILL BE HIS FIRST PRIORITY (BANGKOK 8898), AND HE WILL BE UNLIKELY TO SPONSOR MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY CHANGES. BOTH SANYA AND PRAKOP ARE CONSERVATIVE PERSONALITIES AND FRIENDS OF THE UNITED STATES. PARTICULARLY
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SINCE SANYA DID NOT MAKE ANY CHANGES IN THE FOREIGN MINISRY, WE SHOULD EXPECT NO MAJOR ALTERATIONS IN THAI-AMERICAN RELATIONS. THE CHANGES IN THE DEFENSE MINISTRY SHOULD NOT IMPINGE ON OUR BASIS INTERESTS IN THAILAND. THE NEW TECHNOCRATS IN THE ECONOMIC AFFAIRS MINISTRIES MAY FURTHER THE TREND TOWARD GREATER EMPHASIS ON THAI/ U.S. ECONOMIC RELATIONS.
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